



8 May 2024

Dear Parents/Carers,

Re: Post-16 Transport 2024/25

Following the announcement of a proposal to increase the costs of transport for post-16 students across the Local Authority, I shared the proposal with parents/carers. Following the meeting which took place in school, I wrote to you again to ask that you respond to the authority's consultation. At that time, I promised those present I would keep all parents/carers informed of the outcome as soon as I was aware.

Last night, I attended the Authority Cabinet meeting on your behalf and spoke of the significant challenges the proposals would create. A link to the meeting on YouTube is below with the discussions on transport starting at 1hour: 15mins. I have also copied my speech below.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CScwyP5_oPw

"Firstly, thank you for giving me the opportunity to address you this evening on behalf of the community I serve as the Principal of Guilsborough Academy. I have read with interest the consultation and proposals in relation to the dedicated school transport arrangements for post-16 students.

While I recognise there is no requirement to provide school transport for post-16 students, there is a statutory requirement for those students to attend a place of education or training.

Guilsborough Academy, like other large secondary schools, must balance the curriculum we can offer with the number of students attending. This is particularly crucial at KS5 (post-16) level.

As a rural academy, the majority of our students use buses to get to and from school each day. A very small number live locally and walk, with the remainder brought to school by parents/carers or other family members.

The proposals as they have been written will increase the costs of transport to school from £600 to £1000 per year, per child for those families with children attending Guilsborough 6th form. This is a 66.6% increase in costs. I have noted the concessions in place for students with an EHCP and, potentially, for those who have multiple children attending the same school. Also, for those on a low income.

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The challenges this will cause are numerous and include:

- *The significant costs for families at a time when the cost of living is already challenging.*
- *A potential increase in traffic as a result of families choosing to transport their children themselves. This will impact on the local communities, increasing risk due to traffic, as well as increasing emissions.*
- *A reduction in the breadth of curriculum available locally. This will happen if fewer students are able to attend Guilsborough and we have to cut courses.*

I encourage the Cabinet to consider the impact this change will have on those families who rely on this transport for their children. The consultation clearly demonstrates the depth of feeling from our community.

Families should not be expected to 'pay for' the authorities' decisions/or lack of decisions in relation to the cost of transport over the last 10 years. The imposition of a 66.6% rise in costs for our community cannot be considered fair. This is effectively a charge on families who are attending their local school and fulfilling the compulsory requirement to remain in education or employment with training until the age of 18.

However, I know that our families recognise the increased costs of providing the service and are therefore understanding of the need for a review.

I believe greater support for the proposal would be gained by phasing the introduction. This would allow families to budget appropriately and have a better understanding of future costs. Allowing families to pay for the annual cost using a monthly payment, while useful, does not actually reduce the initial annual impact. By phasing the increase over two or three years, families would have the opportunity to plan their finances. It will also allow our young people to study their preferred courses at the school of their choice.

Finally, I would ask that the values set for financial support are reviewed in line with the recent increases in the cost of living. If this proposal is voted through as it stands, some families in West Northants will be required to spend over 5% of their annual income just getting their children to school.

Therefore, I hope the Cabinet will consider amendments to the proposal."

While we also had very strong support from two Councillors, who also spoke to the Cabinet and opposed the proposals, members of the Cabinet voted the proposals through without any amendments.

I am very disappointed by this outcome, and I will be working with others to see what we can do to mitigate against these increased costs.

Yours sincerely,



Mr S Frazer
Principal